

# ARNOLD ARBORETUM

HARVARD UNIVERSITY



## BULLETIN

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PLANTS OF CURRENT INTEREST. PINK and white are now the prevailing colors at the Arboretum. The azaleas are not yet conspicuous but there is no lack of bloom, for the flowering cherries and crabapples are mounds of pink and white. Earlier in the month the finest show of cherry bloom was near the Forest Hills Entrance. Though this planting still shows color, the center of the stage now belongs to the later-flowering varieties which are seen at their best on the Overlook. It is unfortunate that more visitors to the Arboretum do not find this little orchard of cherry blossom which is situated on the plateau just below the summit of Bussey Hill. It can be reached quickly, though precipitously, by climbing up sharply to the right from the South Street Entrance. Many other interesting plants besides the cherries will be found there for the site has what the orchardists call "good air drainage". It has accordingly been chosen for choice but somewhat tender shrubs which might be injured by the colder night air of the valleys.

These late-flowering Japanese cherries are the results of generations of breeding and development. Many of the flowers are over two inches across; some are white, some pink, and some are even green. While the latter look somewhat grotesque on the tree, taken indoors and given the right background they make effective and beautiful cut flowers.

Botanically these late-flowering varieties are somewhat puzzling. There are many species of cherry growing wild in the Orient. Natural hybrids are not unknown and the whole situation has been complicated by the developments which have taken place under cultivation. Ever since 1822 when Samuel Brooks, an enterprising English nurseryman, began introducing them into western gardens botanists have been try-



T. Makino, ad nat. delin.

F. Mishina, sculp. Tokyo Tankiji Type Foundry, lith. et imp.





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ing to work out a satisfactory classification. The late Dr. E. H. Wilson straightened out some of the snarls in his "Cherries of Japan", but there are still many doubtful points.

One thing seems certain; many of the varieties are derived in whole or in part from a wild cherry of central Japan (*Prunus serrulata* var. *spontanea*) which is shown in detail in the accompanying plates. Other varieties are catalogued under the closely related species *Prunus Lannesiana*, which differs chiefly in having long, almost bristle-like, outgrowths along the leaf margin, and in the fact that the leaves are reddish when unfolding. *Prunus Lannesiana* is not known to exist anywhere as a wild tree and it may be that there is really only one species, *P. serrulata*. Again it is quite possible that there are two species and that some of our varieties are hybrids. For the present the Arboretum continues, for convenience, to list part of the varieties (those with the more fragrant flowers and with the longer aristae on the leaves) under *P. Lannesiana* and the remainder under *P. serrulata*.

Faced by the frank admission of our ignorance, some laymen will be refreshed, many will be puzzled, a few actually annoyed. Those who have had real contact with scientific work will understand. Science is not static; its judgments change from day to day as new evidence comes to light. Even the naming of plants, apparently simple process though it might seem to be, partakes in this way of the nature of all scientific work. The father of American Botany, Asa Gray, put the matter in another way when he said that, "Species are but judgments". In other words they are the best estimates that botanists are able to make with the evidence which is at hand at this time.

The loveliest of the Azaleas, *Rhododendron Schlippenbachii*, the Royal Azalea, is in flower on the Overlook; its large flowers of clear soft pink harmonize with the Japanese cherries and the flowering crabapples. While these latter can be seen at several places, the large collection at the foot of Peters Hill, on the Roslindale side of the Arboretum, is worthy of a special trip. Some species are in flower and others are in bud; for at least another fortnight this will be one of the most interesting collections in the Arboretum. The earliest of the lilacs are now in flower and many varieties should bloom by the end of this week.

EDGAR ANDERSON

#### EXPLANATION OF THE PLATES

***Prunus serrulata* Lindl. var. *spontanea* Wils. after Makino**  
in Ic. Fl. Japon. (1900).